

Title: Bedford Free School

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Impact Assessment – Section 9 Academies Act Duty

1. Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty upon the Secretary of State to take into account what the impact of establishing the additional school would be likely to be on maintained schools, Academies, institutions within the further education sector and Alternative Provision in the area in which the additional school is (or is proposed to be) situated. Any adverse impact will need to be balanced against the benefits of establishing the new school.

Background

2. The Bedford Free School is a co-educational 11-16 secondary school proposed to open in central Bedford. The school plans to open in 2012 with a total of 200 pupils (100 yr7 and 100 yr9), reaching 500 pupils at full capacity by 2014.

3. Bedford Free School aims to serve the area of Bedford and Kempston, where educational standards are below national average and have been for some time. Despite a long term aspiration to move to a two tier system, most of the schools in the area are three tier and as such, this Impact Assessment focuses on the direct impact of the Free School on both Middle and Upper Schools throughout Bedford and Kempston as well considering any indirect impact on Lower schools, Further Education (FE) institutions and other types of educational provision in the area.

Education in Bedford

4. Bedford Borough currently run a largely three tier education system. As a 11-16 secondary school, the Free School will have an impact on both middle and upper schools in the area. School performance in Bedford Borough is low and the Borough has a history of underperformance in terms of educational attainment.

Lower Schools

Bedford's Lower School performance is in line with the national average, with pupils achieving an overall average points score in reading, writing and maths of 15.6 at key stage 1 (national average 15.3).

Middle Schools

A number of middle schools have been in Ofsted categories in the past 3 years. Currently of the 10 middle schools in the area, one is rated inadequate by Ofsted, four are satisfactory, three good and two outstanding. With the exception of the two outstanding schools, all are performing below national average in Key stage 4 and seven schools are 9 percentage points or more below the national average.

Upper Schools

In 2011 the number of pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and

maths was 56.2% compared to a UK average of 57.9% and 63.3% in Local Authorities of similar demographic make-up¹. English Baccalaureate (EBac) results are also below the national average with 14.5% of pupils in state funded schools achieving the Ebac last year compared to 15.4% nationally. The low educational standards have been acknowledged by the Local Authority in its recent report on education; *“...these outcomes are far from what we as a Borough would wish to see and what our parents and young people have every reason to expect.”*²

5. The Free School plans to build on the good performance of Bedford's Lower schools (which achieve national average KS1 results in reading, writing and maths) in a way that the middle and upper schools have historically been unable to do.

Basic need

6. The secondary school population in the Bedford district is projected to fall by 2.5% over the next five years. Of the neighbouring districts, only Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes are projected to see increases in the secondary school population over this time, with the others set to remain stable or decline. It is therefore unlikely that any potential negative impact of the Free School on local secondary schools will be mitigated by increased demand for secondary places in Bedford and its neighbouring areas - all of which currently have levels of existing surplus capacity.

7. However, this data does not take into account a proposed new housing development in Wixams, 3 miles south of Bedford that plans to accommodate a community of 10,000 people. Although there are plans to build a new secondary school within the development there is still a potential to add to demand for pupil places in the area.

Local Authority School Reorganisation

8. As previously stated, Bedford Free School will be an 11-16 secondary school situated in a largely 3 tier education system. There is substantial evidence to suggest that secondary schools achieve better results than those achieved by middle and upper schools. This was acknowledged by Bedford Borough Council who published plans in 2009 to convert schools in the Borough to a two tier system³. Whilst the wholesale conversion to a two tier system was cancelled following the removal of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding, the Local Authority is continuing with a number of middle school closures and expansion of Lower and Upper Schools with a view to moving to a two tier system across the borough in the future. At present, it is unclear what the Local Authority's plans will be across the Borough but two Middle School closures have been confirmed for 2014. This impact assessment takes into consideration the closure of these two middle schools and the increase in Secondary

¹ Statistical Neighbours (SN) are other LAs identified by the DfE as being sufficiently demographically similar to Bedford Borough to enable meaningful comparison. (SN are Bromley, Hertfordshire, Kent, Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Stockport, Sutton, Swindon, Trafford and Warwickshire)

² A vision for Education in the Borough – consultation draft January 2012 ; Bedford Borough Council ; http://www.bedford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/consultations/vision_for_education.aspx

³ School Organisation Review – Bedford Schools for the Future (2009) <http://www.sharnbrook.beds.sch.uk/documents/downloads/Cons%20Doc%20-%20Web.pdf>

School age pupils requiring places.

Admissions Policy

9. The Bedford Free School admissions policy is fully compliant with the admissions code. After children with a statement of Special Educational Needs, if the school is over-subscribed, priority will be given in the following order:

- Looked after children and previously looked after children
- Pupils with exceptional medical or social needs
- Children who have Siblings at the Free School
- Children living closest to the school

Catchment area

10. Bedford Free School is situated in Bedford, where over 80% of pupils attending secondary school travel three and a half miles or less to get to school. The Free School has no specified catchment area but it is likely that the majority of pupils will come from within this three-and-a-half-mile radius. We will therefore consider the direct impact on the 8 Middle deemed Secondary and 4 Upper schools and Academies within this radius as well as any indirect impact on Primary, FE and alternative provision institutions.

11. The use of distance as an oversubscription criteria suggests that the greatest effect will be felt by those schools closest to the Free School as their pupils are most likely to live a short distance away from the Free School. The school has also been targeting pupils in the deprived Kempston area by putting on a special bus service to transport children to the school. This policy of encouraging applications from Kempston means that schools in this area may be impacted disproportionately when compared to other schools of equal distance away. We will therefore pay particular attention to those schools within the three and a half mile radius that are located close to the Free School or in Kempston. These areas are identified in the map at Annex A1.

12. Applications received to date have confirmed that the majority of pupils will come from within this radius and that a significant number of applications have been received from the Kempston area.

Impact on maintained schools and Academies

13. The table below sets out the individual impact on each secondary school (including Middle deemed Secondary) located within three and a half miles of the proposed site⁴. The introduction of the Free School will not affect Middle Schools at entry level (year 5) but may have an impact on pupil numbers in year 7 if parents choose to transfer pupils to the Free School. In general we believe that parents will be less likely to withdraw pupils from an existing school than choose the Free School as part of the natural transition point. This is reflected in the impact ratings for middle schools.

⁴ The three and a half mile is based on the distance that the majority (over 80%) of pupils travel to school in the local authority.

Upper School/Secondary School provision
Middle School provision

School name	Distance from Free School	Impact rating
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Schools with a minimal rating

Biddenham Upper School and Sports College (will take y7 pupils from 2015)	1.26 miles	Minimal
Goldington Academy (converted 2011)	1.28 miles	Minimal
Daubeney Academy (converted 2011)	1.53 miles	Minimal
St Thomas More Catholic School	1.98 miles	Minimal
Mark Rutherford Upper School (becoming Secondary)	2.29 miles	Minimal
Lincroft Academy (converted 2011)	3.34 miles	Minimal
Wooton Upper School	4.2 miles	Minimal
Harrowden Middle School - proposed to close in 2014	1.07 miles	Minimal
Abbey Middle School - proposed to close in 2014	1.2 miles	Minimal

Schools with a moderate rating

Westfield Middle School	1.07 miles	Moderate
Newnham Middle School	1.11 miles	Moderate
St Gregory's Catholic Middle School	1.3 miles	Moderate

Schools with a moderate/high rating

Bedford Academy	1.20 miles	High
Robert Bruce Middle School	1.67 miles	Moderate/high
Beauchamp Middle School	1.77 miles	Moderate/high
Hastingsbury Business & Enterprise College	2.39 miles	Moderate/high

14. A more detailed table providing school capacity data, Ofsted ratings and performance indicators is provided at Annex A2. It shows that the Free School is likely to have a minimal impact on nine schools (including two that are closing in 2014), a moderate impact on three schools and a moderate/high impact on four schools.

Schools with a minimal impact rating

15. It is expected that nine secondary schools in the local area will feel a minimal impact of the Free School. This includes two schools that are closing in 2014. These

schools tend to have good or outstanding Ofsted ratings and all were oversubscribed for entry in September 2011 so, even if they did lose some potential pupils to the new Free School, they should still be able to fill all of their places.

Schools with a moderate impact rating

16. Westfield, Newnham and St Gregory's Catholic Middle Schools are all located relatively close to the proposed site of the Free School. Newnham Middle School and St Gregory's are both rated satisfactory by Ofsted and both have below average attainment so parents might be attracted to an alternative. Although Westfield is rated as good by Ofsted, it has below average attainment and is located only 1.07 miles from the Free School. As a result parents may be attracted to the Free School as an alternative. However, middle school provision (year 5 – 8) only partially overlaps with the proposed Free School age range and parents may be less likely to withdraw pupils at year 7 than at the natural progression point (year 9).

Schools with a moderate/high rating

17. Four schools (Beauchamp Middle School, Robert Bruce Middle School, Bedford Academy and Hastingsbury Business & Enterprise College) may suffer a high impact as a result of the Free School opening, potentially experiencing a significant loss of pupils (although the first two are Middle Deemed Secondary schools, covering years 5-8 and so only partially in competition with the Free School). These schools tend to have low attainment and low Ofsted ratings, putting them at a higher risk of losing pupils to a more attractive new provider. Most have existing surplus capacity and were undersubscribed for entry in 2011/12. The loss of even a small number of pupils to the Free School may exacerbate the existing surplus and attainment issues and threaten the long-term viability of these schools.

Schools with a moderate impact rating

18. The following section summarises what the potential impact may be for the schools where a moderate impact has been identified.

1. Westfield Middle School (1.07 miles from the proposed site)

19. Westfield Middle School is a Middle Deemed Secondary School (i.e. years 5 – 8) with a capacity for 400 pupils. There was a surplus of place of around 12% of total capacity in 2010/11 but the school managed to fill almost all places in 2011/12 receiving 99 applications for 100 places available, suggesting that the school is able to attract pupils at year 5.

20. The school is located just over a mile from the proposed site, less than the average distance travelled to secondary school in Bedford so, in principle, the school could lose more potential pupils to the Free School than schools which are further away. However, the Free School's policy of targeting pupils from the Kempston area may reduce the impact on this school, which is located in an area where pupils would not benefit from the school's free bus service.

21. Although attainment at Key Stage 2 is below average (only 63% of pupils achieve the expected level in English and Maths in 2011 compared with 74% nationally) the school is rated as good by Ofsted which reduces the likelihood of parents being attracted to a new school. Impact is also reduced as the secondary

Free School is only in potential competition with this middle deemed secondary school for a part of its age range. We therefore do not expect the Free School to have a negative impact on the long- term financial viability of the school.

School re-organisation:

22. Westfield Middle School is located less than half a mile from Biddenham Upper School, which is the natural successor school for pupils at Westfield. It is as yet unclear whether or not previous plans for Biddenham Upper School to expand its age range by admitting pupils into year 7 from 2015 will be adopted. If these are adopted it could put additional pressure on Westfield Middle School as the school may lose pupils at year 7 to both the Free School and Biddenham Upper. However, plans have not yet been finalised and as such the assessment above is not affected by school re-organisation as it currently stands.

2. Newnham Middle School (1.11 miles from the proposed site)

23. Newham Middle School is a Middle Deemed Secondary School (i.e. years 5-8). It was rated satisfactory by Ofsted in 2012 and has below average attainment at Key Stage 2, with 64% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and Maths in 2011 compared with 74% nationally. This suggests that parents may be attracted by the option of a new Free School.

24. However, the school is currently operating at capacity and all places were filled for entry in 2011/12. The Free School's policy of targeting pupils from the Kempston area in the South West of the city is also likely to reduce the impact on this school, located in the North East of the town.

25. Impact is also reduced as the secondary Free School is only in potential competition with this middle deemed secondary school for a part of its age range. Parents may be less likely to withdraw their child at year 7 as opposed to the natural transfer point at year 9. We therefore do not expect the Free School to have a negative impact on the long- term financial viability of the school.

School re-organisation:

26. Putnoe Primary School, located just under a mile from the Newnham Middle School expanded its age range from 4-9 to 4-11 in 2011. This means that some children may choose not to transfer from Putnoe Primary to Newnham Middle school as they have done in previous years. However, there are a number of other lower schools in close proximity to Newnham Middle School and the closure of Woodside Middle School, just over a mile away means that it is likely that the demand for Middle School places in the area is unchanged and the school will continue to fill its places at year 5. As such the assessment above is not affected by school re-organisation as it currently stands.

3. St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

27. St Gregory's Catholic Middle School is a Middle Deemed Secondary School (i.e. years 5 – 8) with a capacity for 449 pupils. It had a surplus capacity of 10% in 2011. The school was rated satisfactory by Ofsted in 2012 and has below average attainment at Key Stage 2, with 65% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and Maths in 2011 compared with 74% nationally. This suggests that parents may

be attracted by the option of a new Free School in the area.

28. However, this is a Catholic faith school so parents wanting to send their children to this school may not be interested in the Free School, which does not have a faith ethos. We therefore do not expect that the opening of the Free School to affect the long term financial viability of the school.

School re-organisation:

29. Like Westfield Middle School, St Gregory's is located close to Biddenham Upper School. However, the majority of pupils are likely to progress in year 9 to St Thomas More Upper School, which shares the same faith ethos. The Catholic Federation run a number of faith schools in the Bedford area and they are working to ensure that implications of extending the age range of St John Rigby Lower School and St Thomas More Upper School on St Gregory's Middle School is managed effectively. The addition of a Free School may impact on the ability to manage this change. However, it is likely that parents will continue to choose to send their children to this school as a result of its Catholic ethos as opposed to the non-religious character of the Free School. As a result, the above impact assessment is unchanged.

Schools with a moderate/high impact rating

30. The following section summarises what the potential impact may be for the schools where a moderate/high impact has been identified. Whilst the impact on these four schools has been assessed as moderate/high, the small size of the Free School (500 pupils) and relatively high number of schools that will be impacted will mean that there is unlikely to be a disproportionately high impact on any one school.

1. Bedford Academy (1.20 miles from the proposed site)

31. Bedford Academy is a sponsored 13-19 Academy that opened in 2010, replacing the John Bunyan School. The school has not yet had a full Ofsted inspection, but had a monitoring inspection in January 2012. Ofsted found that the school had made satisfactory progress towards raising standards.

32. The school has capacity for 1,440 pupils and had a relatively large surplus of places of around 57% of total capacity in 2010/11. The school was undersubscribed for entry in 2011/12 with only 174 pupils for 240 places available. However, the number of pupils on roll is increasing and there are a relatively high number of pupils joining after September.

33. The school has attainment well below the national level, with 34% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C including English and maths GCSE compared with 58% nationally. Nevertheless, this is an improvement on the results of the predecessor school (29% in 2010 and 20% in 2009 and 2008).

34. The school is located 1.2 miles from the proposed site, below the average distance travelled to school in Bedford (3.5 miles) and is the closest upper school to the Free School. In principle, Bedford Academy could lose more potential pupils than schools further away.

35. Despite recent improvements, the school has attainment below the national level, so parents could be attracted to an alternative, and the school was significantly undersubscribed for entry in September 2011, with a large number of surplus places. The introduction of the new Free School could make it harder for the school to carry on improving if the school loses potential pupils to the new Free School. This could further exacerbate the existing surplus issue and any loss of pupils to the new Free School is unlikely to be mitigated by an increased demand in the area as the secondary population is projected to decline in Bedford over the next few years. However, Bedford Academy is one of 4 schools with a moderate/high impact rating. It is therefore likely that the impact will be spread evenly amongst these schools and the impact on any one of these schools will be reduced. Nevertheless, Bedford Academy will need to continue to innovate raise standards in order to attract pupils and remain viable. If not, the Free School could have a negative impact on the long term viability of the school.

School re-organisation:

36. In February, Bedford Local Authority announced that the Bedford Academy will become a Secondary (11-19) school in 2014. This will mean that the Academy will be in direct competition with the Free School. This change will coincide with the closing of Harrowden and Abbey Middle Schools, which are less than half a mile from Bedford Academy. Cople, Lakeview, Willington and Wilstead Lower Schools will also become primary schools thus making the 'Bedford Academy Cluster' a two tier system. This will reduce the impact of the new Free School as there will be an increased demand for Secondary school places in the area. Bedford Academy is also the closest existing secondary school to the proposed new housing development in Wixam. As a result, the negative impact of the Free School will be reduced.

2. Robert Bruce Middle School (1.67 miles from the proposed site)

37. Robert Bruce is a Middle Deemed Secondary School (i.e. years 5 – 8) with a capacity for 640 pupils. In 2010/11 it had a surplus of places of around 13% and the school was significantly undersubscribed for entry in 2011/12 with only 86 applications for the 160 places available.

38. The school is located 1.67 miles from the Free School which is less than the average distance travelled to secondary school in Bedford (3.5 miles). It is also located in the Kempston area that will benefit from a free bus service provided by the Free School. As a result, it is likely that Robert Bruce Middle School will lose more pupils to the Free School than other Middle Schools of equal distance away.

39. The school was rated as satisfactory by Ofsted in 2011 and is significantly below average attainment at Key Stage 2 and has been declining. In 2011 only 45% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and Maths in 2010 compared with 74% nationally. School attainment over the past four years is below and shows that attainment has been falling steadily. Parents may therefore be attracted to the Free School as an alternative.

	2011	2010	2009	2008
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Percentage achieving Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics	45%	50%	52%	61%
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40. Despite the low attainment, Ofsted has found the school to be making improvements since the appointment of the new head teacher in 2010 and the school now has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The opening of the Free School could further exacerbate the issue of surplus places in the school and it is unlikely that any loss of pupils to the new Free School will be mitigated by an increased demand in the area as the secondary population is projected to decline in Bedford over the next few years. The Free School could therefore make it harder for the school to carry on improving and a negative impact on the long term viability of the school. As previously stated, this risk is reduced as three other schools have been assessed as moderate/high impact, thus reducing the impact on any one of these schools. The Free School policy has the dual aims of responding to parental choice and raising standards in a local area. The Bedford Free School has shown strong evidence of demand from parents in the area and will challenge the underperformance of other schools. Robert Bruce Middle School will need to continue to make improvements and raise standards to compete with the Free School.

School re-organisation:

41. There are currently no reorganisation plans for schools in the Kempston area. However, the general movement away from a three tier system may mean that parents are more likely to choose a Secondary School over a Middle School. This reinforces the assessment above that the Free School will have a moderate/high impact on Robert Bruce Middle School.

3. Beauchamp Middle School (1.77 miles from the proposed site)

42. Beauchamp Middle Deemed Secondary School (i.e. years 5 – 8) is further away than a number of other Middle schools where the impact of the Free school is judged as minimal or moderate and is also not in the Kempston area of the town. However, it has a surplus of around 8%; failed to fill its 150 places on offer in 2011/12; has below average attainment at Key Stage 2 and has been put into Special Measures following an Ofsted rating of inadequate in their last inspection in 2011.

43. The school also has below average attainment at Key Stage 2, with 63% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and Maths in 2010 compared with 74% nationally. Attainment has been historically low and as a result parents may be attracted to the Free School, focusing on core academic subjects.

	2011	2010	2009	2008
Percentage achieving Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics	63%	69%	67%	65%

44. Although in general, we have concluded that Middle Schools will be less likely to lose pupils to the Free School than Secondary or Upper schools, the inadequate

Ofsted rating and low attainment mean that parents may be more likely to consider the new Free School as a viable alternative and the risk of pupil loss is substantial. Any loss of pupils to the new Free School is unlikely to be mitigated by an increased demand in the area as the secondary population is projected to decline in Bedford over the next few years. The Free School could therefore have a negative impact on the long term viability of the school. Again, the spread of moderate/high impact over four schools will prevent any one school from feeling a disproportionate impact and the impact should be viewed in the context of Free School's driving up standards through the creation of competition in an area.

School reorganisation:

45. St Thomas Moore and Mark Rutherford Upper Schools are both expanding their intake to include year 7 pupils. They are also located closer to Beauchamp Middle school than the Free School and as a result, will increase to the potential loss of pupils at year 7. It is unlikely that the closing of Woodside Middle School, 1.5 miles away, will mitigate this. This supports the above assessment that the additional impact of the Free School in this area could have a negative impact on the long term viability of the school.

4. Hastingsbury Business & Enterprise College (2.39 miles from the proposed site)

46. Hastingsbury Business & Enterprise College is located 2.39 miles from the Free School and as such may feel less impact than closer schools. However, it is in the Kempston area of town where the Free School is likely to receive high numbers of pupils following the decision to run a free bus service from Kempston to the Free School.

47. The College was rated satisfactory in 2009 and attainment was below the national average in 2011 – 49% of pupils achieved 5+ A*-C grades including English and maths GCSE compared with 58% nationally. As a result, parents may be attracted to the Free school as an alternative.

48. However, the monitoring visit by Ofsted in February 2011 found that satisfactory progress had been made and the school now demonstrated a better capacity for sustained improvement. Although attainment remains below the national average, the table below shows that it has been improving

Year	Percentage of pupils achieving GCSEs 5A* to C including English and maths
2007	32%
2008	28%
2009	39%
2010	33%
2011	49%

49. Despite this progress, the school has capacity for 957 pupils, and there was a small number of surplus places of around 5% of total capacity in 2010/11. The school was undersubscribed in 2011/12, filling 202 of the 260 places on offer. This suggests that the introduction of the Free School may mean that Hastingsbury

Business & Enterprise College may find it increasingly difficult to fill its places over the next few years. If the College fails to raise standards in the next few years the surplus capacity may increase. It is unlikely that any loss of pupils will be mitigated by increased demand in the area as the secondary school population is projected to decline. Therefore the opening of the Free School could have a negative impact on the long-term financial viability of the school.

School reorganisation:

50. There are currently no reorganisation plans for schools in the Kempston area. However, the proposed new housing development in Wixam may lead to additional secondary places required in the area in the future. This may reduce the impact of the Free School identified above.

Impact on other phases

51. The Bedford Free School is not providing sixth form education and as such it is unlikely that it will directly impact on any post 16 provision in the area. We have therefore excluded Further Education institutions from the detailed analysis above. However, both Bedford Academy and Hastingsbury Business and Enterprise College include post 16 provision. If these institutions lose Secondary aged pupils to the Free School, the numbers of pupils who choose to attend their sixth form may drop. This is made more likely as the Free School is located opposite Bedford College and pupil's may therefore be attracted to provision in an area they know. This increases the motivation on these schools to raise standards in order to attract pupils.

52. Bedford Free School will not have a feeder primary or lower school and it is therefore unlikely that the Free School will have any impact on Lower Schools or Primary schools in the area. It is unlikely that parents will choose to move closer to the Free School in large enough numbers to have an impact on any Primary or Lower schools further away from the Free School site.

53. Alternative Providers and special schools are not examined here in detail, due to the substantial difference of offer between the provision they provide and that of the Bedford Free School. We expect the potential impact on these providers to be minimal.

Free School Consultation

54. The Bedford Free School Trust carried out a public consultation between 22nd December 2011 and 10th February 2012. As part of their consultation, the Trust wrote to Local Authorities, local schools, families, community groups and other interested parties. They also used their website to release new information as it became available and held a number of open public meetings.

55. The Trust received 12 formal responses to the consultation. 5 were supportive of the Free School, one neutral and 6 were unsupportive. Of those that were not in favour of the Free School signing a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, concerns were raised that the Free School may unsettle wider Local Authority school reorganisation plans and create surplus places in the area. The Free School have considered these responses and believe that they are meeting the Local Authority's aspirations to move to a two tier education system. Whilst it is likely that the Free

School will create some surplus places in the short term this could be managed in the long term as part of the Local Authority's school reorganisation.

Local Authority Response

56. The Department wrote to the LA on 20 January 2012 to seek their views on Bedford Free School and received a response on 10 February 2012. The LA is not supportive of the Free School. This is based on a fundamental opposition to the Free School Policy that the Local Authority believes will create surplus places and take away resource from other schools. The below is taken from the LA's 2012 consultation document A Vision for education in the Borough:

In relation to free schools, which will be new establishments, the Council is concerned that they will create additional (and currently not needed) school places, and extract pupils and hence funding from existing schools, thus potentially damaging existing schools' sustainability and financial viability to the detriment of current and future pupils and their communities.

57. Officials have been in contact with the Local Authority on a number of occasions and have responded to the points raised. The response has emphasised the Free School's policy aims of responding to parental demand and increasing choice and drive up standards in the local area. All schools will need to raise standards to attract and retain pupils and remain viable.

Conclusions

58. Analysis has shown that the Bedford Free School will have an impact on a number of schools in the area that may lead to a negative impact on their long-term financial viability. This is a result of the local area having existing surplus places at present. It is too early to tell whether the new housing development in Wixam will have a major impact on this as educational provision is included in these plans. The Local Authority's school reorganisation also makes it difficult to assess the impact on schools but it is clear that those schools that are underperforming and have surplus places will face a moderate/high impact by the opening of the Free School.

59. The Free School policy has the dual aims of responding to parental choice and raising standards in a local area. The impact on other schools should be viewed in this context. International evidence has shown that Free Schools drive up standards across the local authority where the school is situated, so driving up standards for all young people. The Bedford Free School will challenge the endemic underperformance of schools in this area in a number of ways;

1. providing a strong focus on core academic subjects
2. strong leadership and sharing of best practice with other Outstanding educational establishments
3. longer school day to allow for a focused individual learning plan for each student
4. challenging the weaknesses of a three tier education system

60. Bedford Free School will be located in an area where school standards are historically low. The Free School will offer a real alternative to the existing three tier

system and help to drive up standards across the Borough. The small size of the Free School and relatively high number of schools that will be impacted will mean that there is unlikely to be a disproportionately high impact on any one school. This will increase the level of competition in the area as all schools will need to raise standards in order to compete for pupils. This Impact assessment concludes that while establishing the Free School will have a moderate/high impact on four schools, it will also improve choice and could drive up standards in the area. Officials therefore believe that it is appropriate for the Secretary of State to enter into the Funding Agreement with the Academy Trust in light of the possible impacts.

Annex A2

Upper/Secondary Provision

Middle deemed Secondary Provision

School name	Distance from Free School	Impact rating	Capacity	Pupils on roll	Surplus places	Surplus as %	Ofsted Rating	Key Stage 2 Percentage achieving Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics (national = 74%)	Level 2 (5+ A*-C) (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs (national = 58.2%)	Ebac (national = 15.4%)
Schools with a minimal rating										
Biddenham Upper School and Sports College (will take y7 pupils from 2015)	1.26 miles	Minimal	955	1039	-84	-8.8	Good (2011)	N/A	46%	15%
Goldington Academy (converted 2011)	1.28 miles	Minimal	676	677	-1	-0.1	Outstanding (2010)	79%		
Daubeney Academy (converted 2011)	1.53 miles	Minimal	480	481	-1	-0.2	Good (2010)	72%	N/A	N/A
St Thomas More Catholic School	1.98 miles	Minimal	818	822	-4	-0.5	Outstanding (2011)	N/A	47%	5%
Mark Rutherford Upper School (becoming Secondary)	2.29 miles	Minimal	1217	1116	101	8.3	Good (2010)	N/A	64%	15%
Lincroft Academy (converted 2011)	3.34 miles	Minimal	648	769	-121	-18.7	Outstanding (2009)	78%	N/A	N/A
Wooton Upper School	4.2 miles	Minimal	1218	1241	-23	-1.9		N/A	73%	18%
Harrowden Middle School - proposed to close in 2014	1.07 miles	Minimal	480	480	0	0.0	Good (2010)	52%	N/A	N/A
Abbey Middle School - proposed to close in 2014	1.2 miles	Minimal	400	274	126	31.5	Satisfactory (2010)	62%	N/A	N/A

Schools with a moderate rating

Newnham Middle School	1.11 miles	Moderate	594	594	0	0.0	Satisfactory (2012)	64%	N/A	N/A
Westfield Middle School	1.07 miles	Moderate	400	379	21	5.3	Good (2012)	63%	N/A	N/A
St Gregory's Catholic Middle School	1.3 miles	Moderate	449	359	90	20.0	Satisfactory (2010)	65%	N/A	N/A

Schools with a moderate/high rating

Bedford Academy	1.20 miles	Moderate/ high	1440	626	814	56.5	Satisfactory Progress to raising standards (2012)	N/A	34%	1%
Robert Bruce Middle School	1.67 miles	Moderate /high	728	543	185	25.4	Satisfactory (2011)	45%	N/A	N/A
Beauchamp Middle School	1.77 miles	Moderate /high	600	558	42	7.0	Inadequate (2011)	63%	N/A	N/A
Hastingsbury Business & Enterprise College	2.39 miles	Moderate /high	957	901	56	5.9	Satisfactory (2010)	N/A	49%	3%